Commerce Opportunities On-Line
Applicant User Guide

Table Of Contents

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Commerce's automated vacancy announcement and application system, Commerce Opportunities On-Line (COOL), is a web-based system that contains an up-to-date listing of open vacancy announcements in the U.S. Department of Commerce.

To connect to COOL, point your browser to the following URL (Web address):

https://www.jobs.doc.gov

WELCOME SCREEN

When you first enter COOL, you have several options from the COOL welcome screen.

These options are **Search, Sign-Up,** and **Log-In**. Click on the desired option to select it.

- The **Search** option allows you to search for current vacancy announcements.
- The **Sign-Up** option allows a new user to register in the COOL system by establishing a User ID and Password.
- The **Log-In** option allows a previously registered user to enter COOL, using the user ID and Password created when the user completed the sign-up process.

Each of these options is covered in more detail below.

Please note, COOL is designed for use with Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher and Netscape Communicator 4.0 or higher and is best viewed with a screen resolution of 800x600 or higher. This system uses JavaScript, so please make sure your browser preference is configured with JavaScript enabled. For more information see Technical Tips.

Search

If you select the Search option, you will see a Search screen where you can select the Commerce organization for which you wish to view vacancy announcements. On this screen you can opt to View All Current Commerce Vacancies, or limit your search to a specific Commerce organization that has current vacancy announcements in COOL.

Please note, the Commerce bureaus included under the heading "List of Bureaus With Current Vacancies" on this screen, are ONLY those Commerce bureaus that have current vacancies in COOL.

When you select your view choice, COOL will display the Vacancy Announcements screen for that choice. Your view choice will display to the right of "Vacancy Announcements" in the screen header.

This display of announcements is initially sorts by Vacancy Number. You can reorder the listed vacancy announcements by clicking on any of the displayed column headings, i.e., *, "R" column (Recruitment), Vacancy Number, PP-SER-GR (Pay Plan-Series-Grade), Position, Organization, Close Date, and Location.

Please note, in the PP-SER-GR column, each is a sorting option. When you click on the desired column heading, the list of vacancy announcements will sort according to the selected heading. Also, note: the "*" sort will group together vacancy announcements that have an area of consideration that is limited to employees in the bureau where the position is located. The Area of Consideration field describes who may apply for a position announced under the agency's merit assignment program. More information is contained on the COOL page.

Using the vertical scroll bar on the right side of the screen, you can quickly move through the list of vacancy announcements.

When you locate a vacancy announcement that is of interest to you, simply click on the Vacancy Announcement Number. COOL will display the full text of the vacancy announcement.

If that announcement contains any information or instructions that are of special importance, the information will be boldly displayed in red at the top of the vacancy announcement below the "Apply For This Job" button.

Help information is available for each of the vacancy announcement fields. To access the help information for that field, click on the underlined field label, or click in the heading "For help click here or on any of the field labels." to display help on all the fields and sections of the vacancy announcement.

After reviewing a vacancy announcement, if you are interested in applying for the vacancy, click on the "Apply For This Job" button, at either the top or the bottom of the vacancy announcement. If you began your vacancy announcement search directly from the COOL welcome screen, COOL will take you to the Applicant User Log-In screen and will prompt you to either Sign-Up as a New User or Log-In as a Repeat Applicant. See the **Log-In** or **Sign-Up** sections below.

If you completed the Log-In process before you began your vacancy announcement search, COOL will immediately display the COOL application form for the selected vacancy announcement.

For further instructions on applying for a COOL vacancy announcement, see the section below titled **Applying For A COOL Vacancy Announcement**.

Sign-Up

If you are new to COOL and/or you have not yet registered in COOL, selecting the Sign-Up option will take you to the New User Application screen.

On the New User Sign-Up screen you create your own personal COOL user account, including your Applicant User ID and Password. There is even a Secret Question area for you to complete that will assist you in the event you misplace or forget your password.

It is very important that you remember your User ID and Password. Without these two pieces of information, you will not have access to any information you entered in COOL. If you forget your password; click on "If you have forgotten your COOL password, click here." on the Log-In screen, the system will request your COOL Applicant User ID. Once you enter your COOL Applicant User ID and click "Continue", COOL will request you to verify you Applicant User information by requiring you to enter the answer to your Secret Question and your Social Security Number. Also on this verification screen are fields for you to key in a new password. Once you correctly verify your Applicant User information, you new password will be in effect and you can again access your resume and your application history. If you forget your User ID, please contact the COOL Help Desk.

Once you successfully complete the new user application, COOL will display a "Thank You" and your new User ID. This screen is followed by the display of the Applicant Main Menu.

Log-In

If you have previously created your User ID and Password and you are re-entering COOL, you must Log-In to COOL to access the many Applicant features of the software. Selecting the Log-In option will take you to the Log-In screen. If you entered the Applicant Log-In screen directly from a vacancy announcement, the screen will instruct you "To apply to the vacancy announcement, you must Log-In." On the Log-In screen, enter your Applicant User ID and Password.

Once successfully logged into COOL, the Applicant Main Menu will display.

Technical Tips

On both the COOL Welcome and Log-In screens there is a link to technical tips on using COOL. To access these technical tips, click on "For technical tips on using COOL, and for information on your current browser, click here." At the time this guide was last updated, these technical tips included, for both Netscape and Microsoft Internet Explorer, the following subjects:

Enabling JavaScript
Checking Browser Version
Downloading a Compatible Browser
Printing Suggestions
How to Use COOL Help
Bookmarking
What is JavaScript
Downloading Adobe Acrobat Reader

APPLICANT MAIN MENU

The Applicant Main Menu (Screen 1) is your primary navigation point to access the applicant features in COOL.

Applicant Main Menu
(Screen 1)

From this menu, you can display this user guide; search and apply for vacancy announcements currently posted in COOL; view and edit your application status; view your application history and supporting documents; print off a fax cover sheet; develop and edit your resume; change your password and secret question; review an alphabetical glossary of all the help topics contained throughout COOL, submit an E-mail suggestion or comment about the COOL system; or Log out of COOL. Each of these features is described in the following sections.

COOL User Guide

This feature allows you to display this user guide - online. Use the vertical scroll bar, on the right-hand side of the screen to move through the guide to the desired item. There are always three navigation buttons on the bottom of the page – Previous Page, Table Of Contents, Next Page. If you wish to find a subject quickly use the "Table Of Contents", this will bring you to an index of the users guide. If you want to print a page of the guide you can click on the "Print This Page" button or Press CTRL and P.

Search/Apply For Current Jobs

This feature works identically to the Search option selection from the welcome screen. See the Search section above.

Application Status, History, and Supporting Documents

This COOL feature allows you to view, edit, and withdrawal applications that you have previously submitted for vacancy announcements. Selecting **"Application Status, History, and Supporting Documents"** will take you to a screen that lists applications, and documents you have submitted for jobs.

It is important to note that a change made to an application under this feature ONLY changes that application. If you have submitted an application for several announcements that are still open, AND you wish to edit each of these applications, you must edit each application separately.

This screen contains two main sections. The first section lists all applications that you have created in COOL under this User ID. The second section, **Supporting Documents**, lists all supporting documents, which have been connected to this User ID. Please allow 2 business days after faxing documents for processing.

Application Section

The Application section has two columns. The left column contains all the information for your application and the right column contains information on the position. The applications are sorted by the date you most recently applied. To view you application, click on **VIEW**. To edit your application, if the job announcement is still open, click on **EDIT**. You can withdraw and/or resubmit an application, if the job announcement is still open by clicking on the appropriate statement.

The current status of your application is also displayed on this screen. Listed here are the descriptions for the status information.

Incomplete - Your application was never completed in the COOL system. If the job announcement is still open, click on EDIT to complete this application.

Incomplete with Errors - Your application was never completed in the COOL system. If the job announcement is still open, click on EDIT to complete this application. When it was last saved, it contained errors in the information which needs to be corrected before it can be submitted.

Withdrawn - Your application has been withdrawn from consideration for this job announcement because you clicked on "I'd like to withdraw this application. "If the job announcement is still open, you can click on "I'd like to resubmit this application." to again have it considered.

Submitted - Your application has been successfully submitted for consideration for this job announcement. A Submitted application has many sub-status listed here:

No sub-status - Your application has not be reviewed by Human Resources as of yet.
Your application has been marked 'Not Eligible'. - You did not meet the eligibility requirements and/or basic requirements as defined in the job announcement.
Your application has not been referred to the selecting official. - Your application was not among the best qualified group referred to the selecting official for consideration.
Your application has been referred to the selecting official. - Your application is among those submitted to the selecting official for consideration. NOTE: This process (e.g., review of

applications, holding interviews, and/or making a selection) may take up to 90 days.
Action complete - selection made. - The action on this job announcement is complete and a selection was made for the position.
Action complete - certificate returned unused. - The action on this job announcement is complete and no applicant was selected from the official certificate of eligible applicants for this job announcement within the COOL system.

The right column of the application section contains a link to view the job announcement. To view the job announcement click on the job announcement name (Vacancy Number) in the right column.

<u>**Supporting Documents**</u>
You may view your supporting documents by clicking on the document description. To change the description to better describe your supporting document click on **"change this description"** under the description that you'd like to change. Note: If you have faxed in supporting documents, yet don't see them in the list, please allow two business days from the time of your fax. Not all vacancy announcements require supporting documents. Please review the vacancy announcement for all requirements. Click on "COOL FAX Cover Sheet for Supporting Documents" to print the mandatory cover sheet. If you fail to use the proper cover sheet, your supporting documents will not be attached to your COOL application for consideration.

Note: To view your supporting documents, you must have a version of Adobe Acrobat 4.0 or higher installed on you system.

COOL FAX Cover Sheet for Supporting Documents

If you need to fax any document in to complete your application, you will have to use this cover sheet to insure that your faxed document are properly attached to your COOL resume and applications.

If when selecting documents you make an error you must close this window and reopen by clicking "**COOL FAX Cover Sheet for Supporting Documents**", from the **Applicant Main Menu**. You may change the cover sheet after you print it off if needed.

Please Note: Its takes about two business days for your supporting documents to be available on the COOL System. If your documents do not show on the **"Application Status, History, and Supporting Documents"** page on the third business day please contact the COOL Help Desk as soon as possible, so we may service you in a timely manner.

Develop/Edit Resume

The foundation of the applications that you submit for vacancy announcements contained in COOL, comes from your COOL resume.

The Develop/Edit Resume feature is where you go to create and edit your online resume. Your online resume contains information that usually will not change from application to application. You can create your resume even if you are not presently applying for a job posted in COOL.

When you apply for a specific vacancy announcement, the information contained in your resume automatically flows into the corresponding fields in your application for that vacancy announcement, completing 75 % of your application form. THIS IS A GREAT TIME SAVER WHEN YOU ARE ACTUALLY APPLYING FOR A COOL JOB!

Creating your resume, before you apply for your first job in COOL, is strongly recommended. In fact, if COOL detects that you have not created your online resume when you apply for your first job, a screen will display to remind you of the benefits of doing your resume first.

However, if you do opt to apply for a COOL job without first doing your online resume, when you submit your completed application, COOL will provide you the opportunity to establish your online resume from the information entered on this application. It does this by comparing your application to your blank resume and asking if you want to "Update Resume?" This option is provided on the same screen that provides you an acknowledgment that your application has been submitted for the vacancy announcement you just applied for. For more information see "Your Application Can Update Your Resume".

Instructions on completing the resume are provided at the top of the form. To move through the COOL resume, use the vertical scroll bar on the right side of the screen. Help and further information on each section of the resume is available by clicking on an underlined field label **OR** by clicking the word **here** in the heading "For help, click **here** or on any of the field labels" located at the top of the resume form.

The resume provides for up to eight work history descriptions. Each work experience has a section where you are asked to provide a **BRIEF** description (3000 characters or approximately 35 - 40 lines of text or less) of your work experience. You can use Windows "Copy" and "Paste" functionality to complete these sections (and all other sections of the resume) using an existing electronic version of your resume or application. It is NOT necessary for you to complete every work experience block. Also note, COOL will chronologically order your work experience blocks, based on the "To" dates, once you save your resume in the database. So, if you get a new job and edit your resume, you can enter that job in the next available open work experience block, and when you save your resume (after you complete your preview), this new work experience will float to the top.

After you have completed all the sections of the COOL resume, click the **Preview Before Saving Resume** button located at the bottom of the resume form. COOL will display your resume in a preview format, where you can check the accuracy and completeness of your resume.

On the preview screen, you will notice a change in the resume form. The fill-in boxes are no longer displayed and the information that you entered in these boxes is now displayed in red type. This makes your review of your resume easier.

It is important to note that this preview screen is "view only", meaning that you cannot make changes to your resume while in the "Preview" step. If you find you need to make a change to your resume, click the **Edit** button at the bottom of the preview screen. Clicking the **Edit** button will return you to the resume edit screen, so you can make the necessary changes. After making the changes, again click **Preview** to reenter the preview screen.

Once you have finished the preview of your resume, and are ready to save your resume in COOL, click the **Save** button at the bottom of the preview screen. **You must click the Save button at the bottom of the preview screen to save your resume in the COOL database.** COOL will display a Thank You acknowledgment that your resume has been saved, along with a reminder notice that reads: REMINDER: YOU HAVE NOT APPLIED FOR A JOB. TO DO SO, YOU MUST FIRST SELECT AND ENTER THE DESIRED COOL VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT AND THEN CLICK ON "APPLY FOR THIS JOB"...

It is also important to note that changes made to your resume, from this Develop/Edit Resume area, after you have applied for a jobs in COOL, will not update those previously submitted applications. For instruction on making changes to previously submitted applications, see the section below titled Application Status, History, and Supporting Documents.

Change Password

This feature allows you to change your Password in COOL. When you select this option, COOL will display a Change Password screen.

You will be prompted to enter your current password, and to enter and re-enter your new password. When your password has been successfully changed, COOL will display an acknowledgment.

Change Secret Question

Similar to the change password feature, the Change Secret Question feature allows you to change the secret question and answer that you established when you initially signed up in COOL. Remember, the secret question and answer will assist you if you happen to forget or misplace your COOL password. When you select this option, COOL will display a Change Secret Question screen.

You will be prompted to enter your current password, and then enter your changed secret question and answer. When your secret question or answer has been successfully changed, COOL will display an acknowledgment.

Remember, you must remember your answer to your secret question, EXACTLY as you entered it into COOL, case and all.

Glossary Of Help Topics

This feature provides you an alphabetically arranged list of all the Help topics and terms that are used throughout COOL. When you select this option, COOL will display a pop-up box that contains the Glossary of Help Topics. Use the vertical scroll bar, on the right-hand side of the screen to move through the glossary to the desired item.

Suggestions/Comments for COOL

This feature allows you to send an e-mail to a COOL program person, regarding suggestions you may have to make Commerce Opportunities On-Line an even better system, OR to provide comments on your use of the software. When you select this option, COOL will initiate an e-mail in your browser's e-mail system.

Please note: Your browser has to be configured properly for this feature to work correctly. If you are not able to send an e-mail by clicking this option, **copy** the e-mail address that displays in the e-mail, when this option is selected, and then **paste** that address into an e-mail using your e-mail system.

Log Out of COOL

This menu selection will initiate the process to log out of COOL. You will be asked to confirm your log out request, to protect against logging out by clicking this button by mistake.

APPLYING FOR A COOL VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Once you have located a vacancy announcement in COOL for which you wish to apply, click on one of the "Apply For This Job" buttons, from within the vacancy announcement, located at either the top or the bottom of the announcement form.

Once you select Apply For This Job, COOL will first check to see if you have completed a resume in COOL. If not, COOL will display a screen to remind you of the benefit of doing your resume first. If you opt not to first do your resume, OR, you have already completed your COOL resume, COOL will display the application form for the selected vacancy announcement. The information contained in your resume will automatically flow into the corresponding fields in your application.

Please Note: You do not have to complete an application to save it. You may stop and take a break at anytime, although you must complete an application before Human Resources Personnel can see it. To save your application without completing it, click the "Save & Exit" Link. After you will receive confirmation that your application has been saved. To continue working on your application, go to the "Application Status, History, and Supporting Documents", Off the Main Menu. For more information on continuing a saved application see "Application Status, History, and Supporting Documents" Section.

The application is a tabular view. The tabs being: Info, Personal, Qualifications, Awards/Rating, Questions, and Check & Submit. Under the tabs you will see the pages contained within that tab. You may move back and forth as you please. Each time you change pages it saves the information on that page, no matter how you changed from page to page (except for by your browser's navigation).

On the first page is an introduction to the new format - giving some instruction on how to fill out the application and a check box that when checked makes COOL check your application for errors before moving to the next page of the application. Otherwise it will check your application when you are finished or when you click the "Check & Submit" tab.

Answer each question. For help on some questions, you may click the blue underlined label.

Your Application Can Update Your Resume

If, at the time you submit your application, COOL detects that you made a change to information in an application field that was filled in from your COOL resume, COOL will not only provide you a confirmation that your application has been submitted, but will also provide you two resume update options.

The first option is **Update Resume with all Information from Application.** Selection of this option will completely replace your Resume with the information from this application. If you

select the option to update your resume, COOL will display a "confirmation" that you resume has been submitted.

The second option is **Do Not Update Resume.** Selection of this option will not alter your Resume. If you select NOT to update your resume, COOL will return you to the Applicant Main Menu with no confirmation message.

CONTACTING COOL HELP DESK

You may contact the COOL Help Desk by phone at 1-800-470-8896 or by e-mail at the COOL_HELP@DOC.GOV address. The help desk is available MONDAY - FRIDAY, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM (Eastern Time). You may call and leave a voice mail message at all other times. Voice mail messages and e-mails will be responded to as soon as possible.

THANKS FOR USING COOL!

We hope that this quick reference guide assists you in your use of the COOL system. If you have any suggestions for the improvement of this guide, the COOL system, or have questions on the use of COOL: please contact the COOL Help Desk.